

Marine Transportation Advisory Board

Meeting in Kodiak, Alaska

June 28, 2011

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Mike Korsmo called the meeting in Kodiak, with teleconferencing participants, to order at 9:02 am.

ROLL CALL

Marine Transportation Advisory Board members participating: Ron Bressette, Mark Eliason, Mike Korsmo, Cathie Roemmich, Maxine Thompson, and Robert Venables present in room. A quorum was established.

ROLL CALL VIA TELECONFERENCE:

Marine Transportation Advisory Board members participating: Clay Koplin, Gerry Hope, and Joshua Howes. *DOT&PF/AMHS staff and other participants:* Murry Couzin, Jon Dunham (Civil Rights, DOT), Talina Adams, Penny Eubanks and Jesse McCarron (Marketing, AMHS), Sarah Mason (Planner, DOT), Danielle Atkins (Marketing Manager, DOT), Alex Viteri (Federal Highway Administration), Murray Wise (Aleutians East Borough), David Miller (Federal Highway Administration), and others undeclared.

INTRODUCTION OF THOSE PARTICIPATING

DOT&PF/AMHS staff: Captain Mike Neussl, Captain John Falvey, and Lisa Shrestha
Members of the public at meeting: Chris Lace (Aleut Corporation), Yakutat Mayor Stone, Wes Hanna (Kodiak Daily Mirror), Lindsey Howell, (Kodiak Chamber of Commerce), Marina Ketchum (Lynden Transport), John Whiddon (Kodiak City Council), and Judy Fulp (Borough Assembly of Kodiak).

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chairman Mike Korsmo asked board members to comment on the agenda. Board member Cathie Roemmich asked that a discussion of the court of appeals ruling regarding the Juneau Access road be added under the topic of the Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan.

MOTION: Board member Mark Eliason moved to approve the agenda with the noted additions; it was seconded by Board member Robert Venables, and with all in favor, the motion carried and the agenda for 6/28/2011 was accepted.

APPROVAL OF MAY 3, 2011 MINUTES

Board member Gerry Hope asked that it be noted that he attended the teleconference board meeting of May 3, 2011, and board member Thompson asked that the specific date of the April minutes referred to be added into the minutes. With those additions, and with a voice vote, the motion carried to accept approval of the May 3, 2011 Minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chris Lace, Aleut Corporation, introduced herself and addressed the board. She thanked AMHS for adding additional ferry service to the Aleutian region from one time a month to two runs per month. She is hoping MTAB might include the Pribilof Islands as an additional area of service. She has written numerous letters requesting this. Board member Roemmich asked specifically what area Ms. Lace was requesting service to. Ms. Lace indicated that St. George in the Pribilof Islands was the community requesting service. Board member Thompson suggested that it is expensive to travel to the Pribilof Islands, and that she recognizes that it is important to the economic development of the area. Ms. Lace again noted that she has been involved in a letter-writing campaign to include service to the outlying region. Ms. Lace handed out a document, outlining what services she was hoping to have included. She mentioned that the area does have a dock but she does not know the depth of water at the dock. Board members and staff discussed the pros and cons of adding this service. It was stated that data on the population served by adding the service would be needed to consider the request.

Lindsay Howell, Kodiak Chamber of Commerce, addressed the board regarding the recent Crab Festival in Kodiak, May 24-28, 2011. She said that there was some difficulty in getting adequate ferry service for the participants to and from the festival. She stressed that the festival is a critical piece of fundraising for Kodiak. The Board discussed that there were some logistical concerns regarding using additional ferries for the festival and changing their routes to accommodate passengers – particularly the May dates conflicting with Bellingham routes. Chair Korsmo commented that the Board had another year to work out the logistics regarding this, and it was important to continue the dialogue. Captain Falvey commented that forgoing the Bellingham route in order to accommodate the May dates would be a financial consideration, as it would be quite expensive.

Judy Fulp with the Borough Assembly of Kodiak addressed the board next. She commented that she'd been a resident of Kodiak since 1963. She gave thanks for the work scheduled for a new ferry dock in Kodiak, as well as plans for eventual replacement of the Tustumena vessel, the ferry she referred to as the "workhorse" of the fleet. She reiterated how important the crab festival is to the economy of the area residents and the other communities in the surrounding areas. She thanked the Board for their hard work on all issues.

Marty Owen, Harbormaster for Kodiak, spoke next. He appreciated that the Board had chosen to take some of the MTAB meetings "out on the road" and that they chose Kodiak this summer. Mr. Owen said that long AMHS layovers have caused difficulties at Pier 2 in particular. Layovers by Kennicott impact pier use by research vessels, fishing vessel and cruise ships. He requests that the Board look at the current scheduling of the dock and mentioned that it is not generally a problem in winter, but more so in the summer months. He also addressed the fact that the city owns pier 1 and expressed concern about the renovation project proposed for that facility given that it is a 70-year old wooden dock. Captain Falvey addressed the need for layovers to

undergo maintenance of the vessels, which is critical, since these maintenance procedures cannot be done while underway. Mr. Owens thanked the Board for the great service provided to his community. He asked if the new dock being planned would work for the Tustumena. Captain Neussl said that as it's been presented, it would be an improvement upon current specifications.

The current proposal being considered is to tear down the building presently near the dock (The Chamber of Commerce building), and add to the parking lot and staging area by filling in that portion of the dock., Because of the age of the dock, the city cannot continue to support it in its present condition. There were several members who felt that it would not be a workable solution as it would take out the present Chamber of Commerce building, which would need to be relocated. Chairman Korsmo said there was an ongoing dialogue regarding plans for the dock. Co-Chairman and Board member Clay Koplin said that the money is not necessarily available to do what some of the proposals call for. There was discussion amongst the board members of possible solutions, the need for planners to remain involved, and the need to keep everyone in the loop regarding changes. Chair Korsmo reiterated that the matter be revisited.

Steve Penn, Terminal manager for Kodiak Airport, introduced himself, as well as Mr. Jordan May (Masters of Towing Vessel Association) Mr. May discussed the challenge of bringing in new members into the maritime community as the average age for captains of vessels is approximately 54 years old. He brought up the need to stimulate interest in young people in the maritime field. He called for more exposure to the merchant marine area. Mr. Penn has been working with high schools to raise interest. He is additionally building a training and support program for tug-boat captains and crew, and has asked for support from both Senator Mark Begich and Senator Lisa Murkowski. It was suggested by board members that with the SE Conference coming up, that could be a good venue in which to promote interest in maritime careers.

After asking for any additional comments from guests present or teleconference guests, the Chairman Korsmo closed the guest comment portion of the meeting.

REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

Chairman Korsmo mentioned how appreciative he was to the Board and the staff at Alaska Marine Highways.. He has seen a huge improvement in the last five years in getting plans completed. He said it was important for the Board to present a good strategy and to obtain necessary funding in order to get goals realized. He commented that Captain Neussl used to live in Kodiak himself, and he welcomed new board member, Joshua Howes, who joined the meeting via teleconference. He introduced Lisa Shrestha, new secretary in Captain Neussl's office in Juneau, who provides administrative support to MTAB.

Chairman Korsmo stated that MTAB was established in 2008 in order to perform long-range planning with the Department of Transportation, and identify specific needs and issues.

Currently there are plans to upgrade the Tustumena, or possibly replace it. The Board is continually keeping an eye on adequate funding for the plans on vessel replacement. As always, the Board encourages participation from the public.

STAFF REPORTS

ADA Transition Plan Jon Dunham with Civil Rights, DOT, via teleconference, spoke about the ADA Transition plans for each AMHS vessel. For some of the older vessels, there will be some areas that won't have an operational solution for ADA because it would require major alterations to the vessel. Mr. Dunham request MTAB members review and comment by the end of August on the ADA transition plans that were handed out. Future public meetings will be announced and held regarding this matter. Captain Neussl commented that the federal ADA rules have changed and our older ships must be reviewed for compliance to the extent practical. Electronic versions of the complete ADA transition plans for AMHS vessels will be emailed to all board members.

Vessel and Operations Update

Capt. Neussl discussed the fleet, updating the board on repairs, overhauls and schedules. He mentioned that Krista Hagen, the new AMHS planner, was doing a great job.

Captain Falvey discussed the extensive repairs made to the Columbia last May which cost four days of revenue sailing. Planning is underway to replace the Columbia engines at a cost of approximately \$25-30 million dollars. Additionally it was brought up that another \$25 million may be needed for engine replacements for the Fast Ferries. The board asked that these items be placed on a list for the board to consider as part of their legislative priorities for the upcoming year.

Keri Traudt reported minor changes to the AMHS winter schedule, and went over those briefly. Danielle Adkins reviewed the AMHS marketing plan covered in a handout that was provided to board members.

There was discussion among the Board whether it was necessary to give 24/7 service as some agencies provide. Board Member Eliason, owner of US Travel, said that while it's helpful to have someone answer the phones on the weekend, perhaps the level of need wasn't as high with scheduling ferries as it is with airlines. Another board member commented that most people plan ahead and would be able to wait until a Monday morning, or the morning of the following day to book their reservation.

Captain Falvey updated the board on a new satellite communication system and plans to install additional satellite domes. Regarding the vessel tracking system, he commented that AMHS has talented staff that is creating a good tracking system. It will

be up on the website soon. In working with the Scenic Byways Group, AMHS in DOT is integrating the ferry reservations system to the website in a creative, unique manner.

Ouzinkie Service

Captain Neussl updated the Board on the Ouzinkie AMHS service request. A new dock is being constructed by Ouzinkie. AMHS has received numerous letters requesting this service, and AMHS will be surveying the community to capture their desires as well.

Fleet Summary

Captain Falvey provided a brief summary of the ferry system, with traffic being about the same as last year. Bellingham traffic has increased with the Kennicott now back in service.

It was brought up again regarding good phone numbers for reservations if travelers are trying to get in touch with someone over the weekend or the evening. Captains Neussl and Falvey both commented that it really varies. There are a limited number of personnel we can put on the system, and we are a state agency, with state hours and limited expansion. Board member Eliason commented that in the current state of the world, often people are accustomed to getting assistance 24/7, rather than just during a 5-day work week.

Since the dialogue on this had begun, the Board suggested that they formally address agenda item #VIII, specifically, Private/Public Marketing Partnerships. Board Member Eliason warned that there are third parties “Shanghaing” companies on the internet in order to compete for business and commissions. For instance, Carnival Cruise Lines, in particular, has purchased all possible typos, wrong spellings, etc. of Carnival Cruise Lines, so that a person looking for their particular entity, do not get directed elsewhere – perhaps to another competitor that will sell the tickets but as a third party, and take a commission. Board member Eliason stressed the need to protect the state agency from others wanting to capitalize upon ferry reservations. The Board suggested internal marketing review their program to ensure that this is not what is happening with our website, although it was agreed that cost would be prohibitive to buy all similar Google searches.

Alaska Class Ferry Status: Funding and Procurement Status

No updated information was available regarding vessel funding or procurement. The Board agreed on the need for a teleconference meeting on July 12th in Juneau, in order to discuss Alaska Class Ferry Procurement in detail. Captain Neussl will give MTAB an update at that July meeting.

Regional Transportation Plan Status/DOT/PF

Southeast Alaska Transportation Plan: Captain Neussl reported that the DOT/PF is taking a new approach to revising the SATP. Andy Hughes met with AMHS in Ketchikan and there are plans for a scoping meeting this fall. Prior to the public scoping meeting MTAB will be consulted and provided with an opportunity to review and comment on the draft plan.

Juneau Access: Cathie Roemmich noted the recent 9th Circuit Court decision as it relates to the Juneau Access project which has impacts within the SATP and the AMHS.

Southwest Alaska Transportation Plan: Major portions of this Plan have been accomplished; a scoping process is planned for the fall of 2012 to do the next update to the plan.

Prince William Sound Transportation Plan: Board Member Clay Koplin stated that the majority of the current Plan's objectives have been generally met. DOT/PF region planner, Sarah Mason, said that the department has allocated \$700,000 toward the next update of the PWSTP.

Yakutat Correspondence – Co-Chair Clay Koplin

The Board discussed the letter drafted by Board Member Clay Koplin to the DOT/PF Deputy Commissioner, AMHS, regarding Yakutat Ferry Service. Board member Eliason was concerned this request for blocking vehicle spots may set an unwanted precedent.

Board member Robert Venables suggested tabling the letter after speaking with the Mayor of Yakutat at more length. Board Member Thompson commented that there was a disappointing experience for the Gold Medal participants, who were told not to make reservations initially but were turned away when the ferry came in to Hoonah. Board member Roemmich agreed with Thompson and asked if there was a possibility of staffing a community liaison for AMHS. She said that reservations are either not available or they are told no space is available. She suggested that the spots be held until a few days before and then if not used, be released for public use. Board member Koplin agreed with Board member Venables about tabling the letter for now. Mayor Stone of Yakutat, via teleconference, agreed, and by a voice agreement around the table, it was decided to table the letter.

Distribution List for MTAB Meetings

Chairman Korsmo brought up the distribution list and asked the Board to look over the handout. Chairman Korsmo said he was working with DOT/PF Deputy Commissioner Neussl and staff member, Lisa Shrestha, to put together a concise, complete distribution list. Deputy Commissioner Neussl mentioned that MTAB board meetings are advertised via GovDelivery and on-line state public notices, but not all interested parties either see it or are able to look through all the notifications to find the MTAB Board meeting. Several people have individually asked to be added to the notification list, and staff member Shrestha is compiling an official MTAB meeting distribution list. Chair Korsmo asked each board member to look over the list and make any additions as they see necessary.

ACTION ITEMS

There were no specific action items.

BOARD DISCUSSION

Next Meeting Date

The next meeting of the Marine Transportation Advisory Board was set for July 12, 2011, via Teleconference, in the Juneau DOT HQ Building, specifically to discuss the Alaska Class Ferry Procurement.

The fall meeting was discussed – it is usually held in September or the beginning of October. Board member Koplin suggested late August. The Board will consider dates and finalize date at the July 12th meeting.

Board Member Gerry Hope asked that a future discussion item be scheduled for the Baranof Warm Springs Ferry Terminal.

Chairman Korsmo mentioned that per the Boards and Commissions website, Maxine Thompson, Clay Koplin and Cathie Roemmich's board seats are all about to expire in September, so the meeting should take place before their term is officially over.

ADJOURNMENT

On a voice vote, the meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Shrestha